

ENHANCING ESL INSTRUCTION THROUGH ECHO CORRECTION: IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION, STRESS, AND INTONATION

Felipe Ivan De Gracia Pinto
Centro Regional Universitario de Veraguas (Universidad de Panamá)
felipe.degracia@updigital.ac.pa
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6286-9957>

DOI: 10.61209/re.v3i1.156

Recibido: 03/2025

Aceptado: 06/2025

Abstract

Panamanian learners of English have got some competence in intonation after they have been taught through theoretical sessions in which they do not receive appropriate feedback or any feedback at all. The present work was an action research; an intervention developed under the qualitative paradigm that was carried out with freshman students of the B.A. program at C.R.U.V. At the end of the intervention, the researcher could notice that the use of immediate echo correction had a positive effect on the students' speaking skill. Many of them changed from having an average and good level of performance to a good and very good level of speaking proficiency in terms of intonation. After this, the researcher could conclude that the constant practice of intonation helps to distinguish between different types of sentences; and that some students need to be exposed to the explanation of every type of intonation pitch.

Keywords: english pronunciation, echo correction, ESL instruction, english stress, englishi intonation.

Resumen

Los estudiantes panameños de inglés han adquirido cierta competencia en entonación luego de haber recibido clases teóricas en las que no reciben retroalimentación adecuada o ninguna. El presente trabajo fue una investigación-acción; una intervención desarrollada bajo el paradigma cualitativo que se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de primer año de la carrera de Licenciatura en el C.R.U.V. Al final de la intervención, el investigador pudo notar que el uso de la corrección de eco inmediata tuvo un efecto positivo en la habilidad de hablar de los estudiantes. Muchos de ellos pasaron de tener un nivel de desempeño promedio y bueno a un nivel bueno y muy bueno de competencia en entonación. Luego de esto, el investigador pudo concluir que la práctica constante de la entonación ayuda a distinguir entre diferentes tipos de oraciones; y que algunos estudiantes necesitan ser expuestos a la explicación de cada tipo de tono de entonación.

Palabras claves: pronunciación en inglés, corrección de eco, instrucción de ISL, acento del Inglés, entonación en inglés.

Introducción

Pronunciation problems when learning a new language have been discussed for a long time. Making a distinction between the spoken and written forms of English is essential for our objectives. The written form of English is typically so familiar to people that it might lead to incorrect assumptions about the sound system.

Since many students have trouble pronouncing words correctly, teachers should focus a lot of attention on various methods while teaching speaking. English has a great deal of historical and dialectal variance in pronunciation, just like many other languages. However, the phonetic systems of the many regional dialects of English are generally comparable, if not identical (Warinthon, 2022).

The key to speaking English fluently and with proper pronunciation is using the right intonation and stress. The music of the English language is referred to by intonation and stress. Stressed words are essential for comprehension, and employing the right tone highlights the meaning. Students should learn to distinguish between individual sounds using minimal pairs after mastering the fundamental consonant and vowel sounds. They should proceed to intonation and stress tasks, like sentence markup, after they feel at ease with individual words (Pennington, 2021).

The notion that we can increase learning by teaching less and giving more feedback has been backed by decades of education research. Compare the peer instruction methodology created by Hansen (2022) at Western Governors University with the conventional lecture-driven course, which frequently results in less-than-optimal learning. He rarely gives his pupils lectures; instead, he assigns them topics to consider on their own before having small group discussions. According to his writing, this technique "provides frequent and continuous feedback (to both the students and the instructor) about the level of understanding of the subject being discussed," leading to improvements in both problem-solving abilities and conceptual understanding of the subject. Better outcomes come from more feedback and less "teaching" (Almond, 2020).

This study helps professors to know whether the use of immediate echo correction, under which students of the B.A. program, at C.R.U. Veraguas, were exposed to, may help them pronounce sentence stress and intonation patterns correctly.

This article is significant because it provides teachers and students with information on how technology and feedback are impacting the world in at least two ways: pedagogically and in terms of language skill improvements as necessary competencies. In this way, the findings of this study could aid students in improving their pronunciation and overcoming it when speaking English. Teachers can also view teaching methods from other angles, which means they can come up with new strategies to make their lessons more engaging for students and possibly improve their speaking performance.

Action research, the kind of study that was developed in this work, involved a detailed interpretation of the scenario under investigation. It encompasses more than just gathering and calculating data; it also involves interpreting the data and significance of the created information. The qualitative paradigm was used in the development of this study.

Methodology

The type of research of the present work is action research developed under the qualitative paradigm, in which the situation in question was interpreted in detail. Not limited to collecting and tabulating data, but it includes the interpretation of the meaning and importance of what was developed during seven weeks. This study took into consideration a sample of 31 freshman students of the B.A. program in English at C.R.U. Veraguas.

These students were applied a pre-test based on the sentence stress and intonation patterns using 20 different sentences of common topics of conversation. After, they continued developing fluency through individual and group activities that promoted the effective use of semantic knowledge, pragmatics, phonology and grammar in conversational act.

While the speaking skill was being developed through the discussion of different topics, students were given an echo correction every time they committed any mistake in pronunciation, grammar, sentences stress or intonation.

Finally, at the end of the seven weeks, the researcher applied a post-test based on the sentence stress and intonation patterns using common topics of conversation.

For pre-test and post-test, the researcher used a rubric to evaluate students' performance. That rubric took into consideration the following criteria:

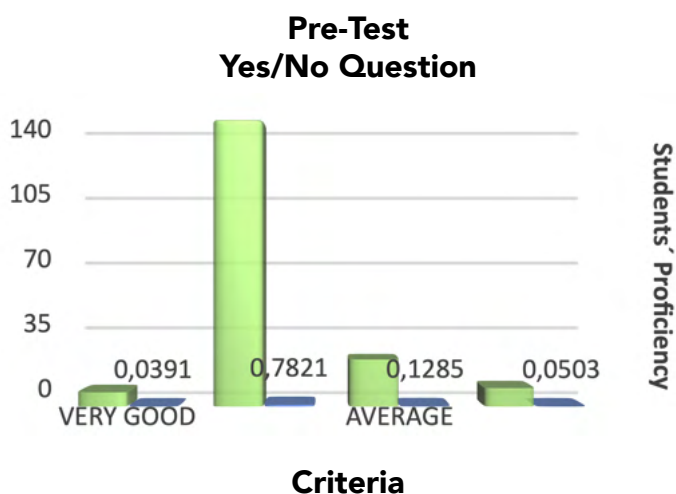
VERY GOOD: more than 90% accuracy.

GOOD: with 70-89% accuracy.

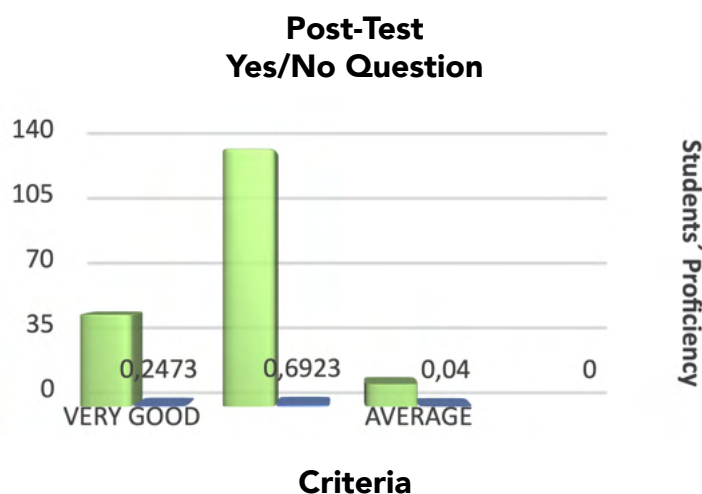
AVERAGE: with 51-69% accuracy.

POOR: with 50% or less accuracy.

Results and discussion

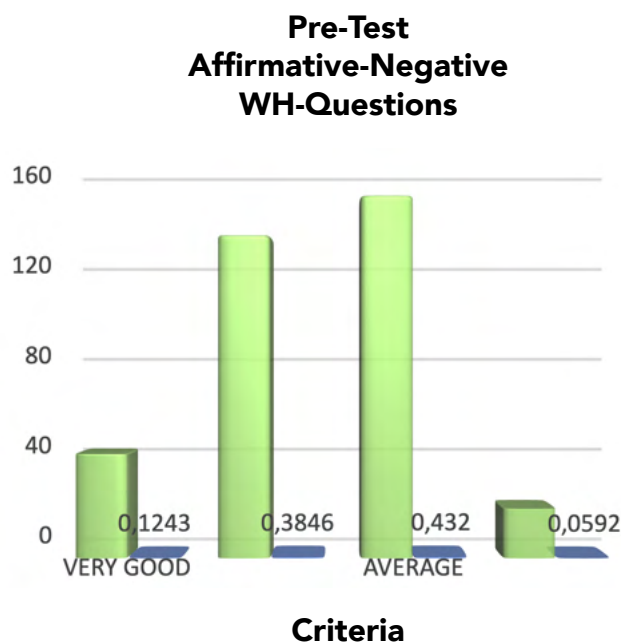


Graph 1 Yes/No Questions provided in the instrument applied as the pre-test.

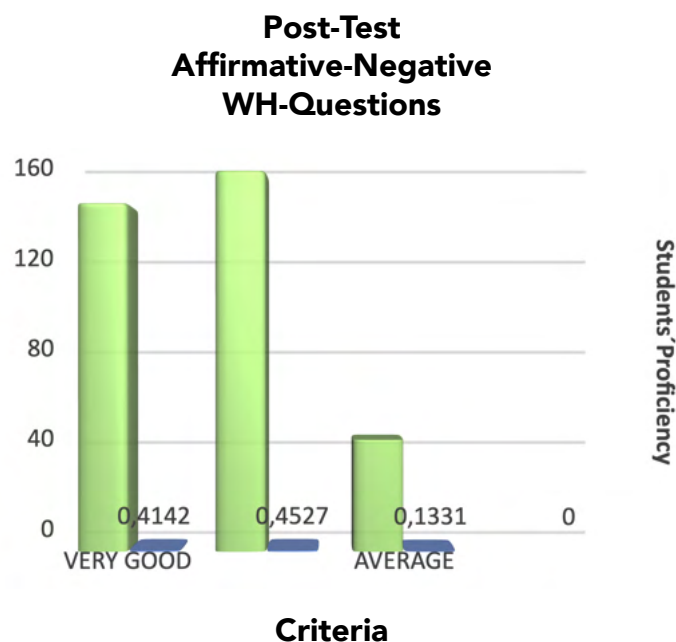


Graph 2 Yes/No Questions provided in the instrument applied as the pre-test.

In the graph 1, we can see that at the moment of applying the pre-test, most of these freshman students had a good level of pronunciation for Yes/No Questions in English according to the sentences provided in the instrument. On the other hand, the results shown in the graph 2 imply that at the moment of applying the post-test, most of the students had reached a very good and a good level of pronunciation proficiency in giving the corresponding intonation and sentence stress to the Yes/No Questions provided and; after being exposed to the immediate echo correction.



Graph 3. Affirmative, Negative and Wh-Questions provided in the instrument applied as the pre-test.



Graph 4. Affirmative, Negative and Wh-Questions provided in the instrument applied as the pre-test.

Graph 3 shows that the majority of the freshman students already had a good and very good level of performance, and some of them needed help to improve their pronunciation in terms of intonation and sentence stress, taking into account the sentences provided. But the results presented in the graph 4 mean that after being exposed to immediate echo correction, the majority of the freshman students had reached a good level of pronunciation proficiency, and just some of them needed help to improve their pronunciation in terms of intonation and sentence stress, taking into account the Affirmative and Negative sentences, and the Wh-Questions provided at the moment of applying the post-test.

After having analyzed the graphs gotten from the instrument applied and having shared seven weeks of teaching with freshman students of the B.A. in English at C.R.U.Veraguas, the researcher could notice that the use of immediate echo correction had its effect on the students' speaking skills. Many of the students changed from having an average and good level of performance to a good and very good level of speaking proficiency in terms of intonation.

The findings of this research relate to what Tuba Demirkol found in his research "Functions of Teacher

Echoing in an EFL Class Delivered via Videoconferencing “at the Social Sciences University of Ankara, 2022. Demirkol (2022) said that in EFL classrooms, repetition appears to be a pedagogic means in the structure of teacher echo where the teacher repeats her/his utterance or a student’s utterance with context-oriented functions. Besides, Lekha (2020) argued that creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable receiving corrections encourages them to engage in communicative activities without fear of embarrassment.

Conclusions

Continuous intonation practice aids in differentiating between phrase kinds. Some pupils are proficient speakers, but they make intonation and word stress errors. For this reason, some pupils must be exposed to the explanation of each intonation pitch type.

As of right now, the majority of first-year students struggle to understand English accents that differ from standard or American English, so it is advised to look for recent materials to work with in class as well as ones that grab students' attention.

Students may not read enough to develop their pronunciation skills, and there are not always enough quality resources available to aid in pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, outside of the classroom, students may not have many opportunities to hear and use authentic English.

Better pronunciation can be achieved by fostering peer interactions by constructive feedback, creating specialized teaching materials, encouraging reading habits, and providing opportunities for real-world language exposure outside of the classroom.

Overall, it can be concluded that there is no one correct method for fixing mistakes made by students. The teacher's job is to find a method that works, gives the students a foundation for future language learning, and is well-liked by their group of students.

Referencias bibliográficas

Agustiana, V. (2022). THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ELSA SPEAKING APPLICATION IN IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION. ELTLT, 5.

Almond, M. (2020, January 14). Musings on Feedback. Retrieved from Nuts about Teaching: <https://nutsaboutteaching.wordpress.com/2020/01/14/musings-on-feedback/>

Bakan, H. (2020). The Importance of Error Correction in Foreign Language Learning. University of Zagreb, 17.

Demirkol, T. (2022). Functions of Teacher Echoing in an EFL Class Delivered via Videoconferencing. EJER Congress, 11.

Galante, A. (2022). Teaching pronunciation: toward intelligibility and comprehensibility. ELT Journal, 375–386.

Hansen, J. (2022, August 30). Peer Learning: Overview, Benefits, and Models. Retrieved from Western Governors University: <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/peer-learning2208.html>

Lekha S. (2020). Enhancing Pronunciation in ESL/EFL Classrooms: Teacher Beliefs and Practices. *Language in India*, 20.

Nguyen, X. (2021). EFL Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Corrective Feedback for Pronunciation. *IJSMS*, 17.

Pennington, M. (2021). Teaching Pronunciation: The State of the Art 2021. *RELC Journal*, 3.

Petrášová, B. (2021). NEW APPROACHES TO EVALUATION OF CORRECT PRONUNCIATION. *ICERI*, 51.

Prahaladaiah, D., & Andrew Thomas, K. (2024). Effect of phonological and phonetic interventions on proficiency in English pronunciation and oral reading. *Education Research International*, 9.

Saito, K. (2021). Effects of Corrective Feedback on Second Language Pronunciation Development. *UCL Discovery*, 8.

Smith, J. (2020). Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation. *Journal of Language Education*, 45(2): 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v7.16349>

Tiwari, H. (2023). Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education*, 12.

Tsateri, R. (2023, March 22). To echo or not to echo? Retrieved from The TEFL Zone: <https://teflzoneracheltsateri.wordpress.com/2023/03/22/to-echo-or-not-to-echo-%F0%9F%94%8A%F0%9F%94%8A/>

Warinthon, D. (2022). Improving English Pronunciation Skills by Using English Phonetic Alphabet Drills in EFL Students. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 7.